Public Service Announcement

Eye Protection in the Workplace

Provided by your

Local Emergency Management Office

EYE PROTECTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Every day an estimated 1,000 eye injuries occur in American workplaces. The financial cost of these injuries is enormous -- more than $300 million per year in lost production time, medical expenses, and workers compensation. No dollar figure can adequately reflect the personal toll these accidents take on the injured workers. Take a moment to think about possible eye hazards at your workplace.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO EYE INJURIES AT WORK?

- Not wearing eye protection. Reports found that nearly three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident.
- Wearing the wrong kind of eye protection for the job. About 40% of the injured workers were wearing some form of eye protection when the accident occurred. These workers were most likely to be wearing protective eyeglasses with no side shields, though injuries among employees wearing full-cup or flat-fold side shields occurred, as well.

WHAT CAUSES EYE INJURIES?

- Flying particles. Reports found that almost 70% of the accidents studied resulted from flying or falling objects or sparks striking the eye. Injured workers estimated that nearly three-fifths of the objects were smaller than a pinhead. Most of the particles were said to be traveling faster than a hand-thrown object when the accident occurred.
- Contact with chemicals caused one-fifth of the injuries. Objects swinging from a fixed or attached position, like tree limbs, ropes, chains, or tools, which were pulled into the eye while the worker was using them, caused other accidents.

WHERE DO ACCIDENTS OCCUR MOST OFTEN?

Craftwork; industrial equipment operation. Potential eye hazards can be found in nearly every industry, but it is reported that more than 40% of injuries occurred among craft workers, like mechanics, repairers, carpenters, and plumbers. Over a third of the injured workers were operatives, such as assemblers, sanders, and grinding machine

operators. Laborers suffered about one-fifth of the eye injuries. Almost half the injured workers were employed in manufacturing; slightly more than 20% were in construction.

HOW CAN EYE INJURIES BE PREVENTED?
Always wear effective eye protection. OSHA standards require that employers provide workers with suitable eye protection. To be effective, the eyewear must be of the appropriate type for the hazard encountered and properly fitted. For example, a survey showed that 94% of the injuries to workers wearing eye protection resulted from objects or chemicals going around or under the protector. Eye protective devices should allow for air to circulate between the eye and the lens. Only 13 workers injured while wearing eye protection reported breakage.

Nearly one-fifth of the injured workers with eye protection wore face shields or welding helmets. However, only six percent of the workers injured while wearing eye protection wore goggles, which generally offer better protection for the eyes. Best protection is afforded when goggles are worn with face shields.

Better training and education. It is reported that most workers were hurt while doing their regular jobs. Workers injured while not wearing protective eyewear most often said they believed it was not required by the situation. Even though the vast majority of employers furnished eye protection at no cost to employees, about 40% of the workers received no information on where and what kind of eyewear should be used.

Maintenance. Eye protection devices must be properly maintained. Scratched and dirty devices reduce vision, cause glare and may contribute to accidents.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?
Your nearest OSHA area office. Safety and health experts are available to explain mandatory requirements for effective eye protection and answer questions. They can also refer you to an on-site consultation service available in nearly every state through which you can get free, penalty-free advice for eliminating possible eye hazards, designing a training program, or other safety and health matters.

EYE PROTECTION WORKS!